

**WASHINGTON, DC** –In the wake of an investigative report into the unlawful removal of the Amtrak Inspector General, three senior Republicans are calling on Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood initiate a Department of Transportation Inspector General investigation to look closely at the actions of Amtrak Chairman Thomas Carper and General Counsel Eleanor Acheson to determine if they should be removed from their positions.

The letter was sent by Sen. Chuck Grassley, the Ranking Member on the Senate Finance Committee; Rep. Darrell Issa, the top Republican on the House's primary investigative committee, the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform; and the Ranking Member for the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Rep. John Mica.

In the letter, sent today to Secretary LaHood, the lawmakers wrote that the Congressional investigation "found that Amtrak Chairman Thomas Carper and Amtrak General Counsel (GC) Eleanor Acheson unlawfully interfered with the independence of the OIG and removed Mr. Weiderhold from his post as IG in violation of the provisions of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (IG Act). The unlawful actions of Chairman Carper and GC Acheson impeded the effectiveness of Amtrak's OIG to such an extent that we intend to ask for their removal pending an independent investigation by the Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Transportation."

The investigative report released earlier this month by Sen. Chuck Grassley and Rep. Darrell Issa concluded that the Amtrak board removed the agency inspector general without prior notice to Congress, as required, and despite the inspector general's effective track record of "exposing waste, fraud, and abuse at the highest levels within Amtrak."

"Despite clear evidence that Amtrak officials acted inappropriately in getting rid of their Inspector General, the continued insistence by senior leadership that nothing inappropriate occurred is deeply disturbing," said Rep. Issa. "There are significant doubts about the fitness to Chairman Carper and General Counsel Acheson to continue in their leadership roles at Amtrak and we are asking Secretary LaHood to investigate and make a final determination about the future of Amtrak's leadership."

"Independence is the most important element for making the inspector general system work. If independence is compromised, either by an inspector general or by agency leaders, then taxpayers are left without a watchdog and a major opportunity for accountability in government is lost. When the system gets compromised, there need to be consequences in order to try to prevent it from happening again," said Sen. Grassley.

“The pattern of mismanagement uncovered at Amtrak is unprofessional, unacceptable and possibly in violation of the law. Amtrak officials must be held accountable for the improper interference with, and ultimate removal of, the railroad’s inspector general, if the results of this investigation are confirmed by the DOT Inspector General,” said Rep. Mica. “Unfortunately, this troubling incident reflects what has become standard operating procedure at Amtrak. In 2005, I first called for a full investigation of Amtrak’s activities and expenditures for legal services, which led to a scathing Amtrak Inspector General report. These and other past investigations, including into Amtrak’s food and beverage service and the Acela acquisition, clearly demonstrate the need for dramatic reform of this quasi-governmental agency. It’s no wonder that apparently some Amtrak officials so badly wanted to dispose of the railroad’s watchdog.”

On September 13, 2010, Grassley and Issa released a minority staff report on the removal of Fred Weiderhold as Amtrak’s inspector general.

The report concluded that Weiderhold was removed by the Amtrak board without prior notice to Congress and contrary to the Inspector General Act, which specifically states that Amtrak is required by law to give 30 days' notice to Congress before removing its inspector general and the reasons for doing so. The report found no evidence that the Amtrak board made any effort to engage in any meaningful prior consultation with Congress.

In their letter, Reps. Issa, Mica and Sen. Grassley make it clear to Secretary LaHood that Amtrak's actions must be dealt with in a serious manner. They wrote, "It is our belief that the findings of the Joint Committee's investigation are sufficient to warrant the removal of Chairman Carper and GC Acheson. We request that you initiate an independent review of this matter so that we can be confident responsible management is in place at Amtrak."

Inspectors General were created by Congress to be the first line of defense against waste, fraud and abuse, and as the lawmakers observed, "Congress has an obligation to protect the independence and effectiveness of every Inspector General from impairment by agency management. When agency management interferes with OIG independence to the extent that the protections put in place by Congress through the IG Act are effectively eradicated, there is no remedy but termination of those responsible. In the case of Amtrak, those responsible are Chairman Carper and GC Acheson."

[Click here](#) for a copy of the letter from Sen. Grassley, Rep. Issa, and Rep. Mica.

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